

OTAGO.

SIR,—

As required by the Education Act, 1914, I have the honour to present the following report of the Education Board of the District of Otago for the year 1925 :—

Board.—The only change that occurred in the personnel of the Board was by the election of Mr. James Mitchell as one of the representatives of the North Ward in the place of Mr. G. K. Graham, who found it necessary to retire owing to the pressure of private business. The present composition of the Board is as follows : Urban Area—Messrs. James Wallace, J. H. Wilkinson, R. H. S. Todd, and Leonard Sanderson ; North Ward—Messrs. George Livingstone and James Mitchell ; Central Ward—Messrs. James Smith and James Horn, M.P. ; South Ward—Hon. D. J. Fleming, M.L.C., and Mr. George W. K. Wood. Mr. James Wallace continues to occupy the office of Chairman, it being now his eighth year in that position. Thirty-eight meetings of the Board have been held during the year, the average attendance being eight.

Number of Schools.—At the close of the year there were 253 schools in operation—five less than in the previous year. Fifteen (including ten household schools) had an average below 9, seventy-eight had an average from 9 to 20, fifty-four from 21 to 35, thirty-two from 36 to 50, twenty-two from 51 to 80, eighteen from 81 to 120, seven from 121 to 160, two from 201 to 240, one from 241 to 280, four from 281 to 320, two from 321 to 360, three from 361 to 400, two from 401 to 440, and thirteen above 440.

Teachers.—Consequent upon the adoption of a new scheme of entrance to the teaching profession, involving the abolition of the pupil-teacher system, the number of young people admitted to the Education service in this district last year was cut down by about half. Young entrants are now known as probationers, and a quota of positions is assigned for each district by the Department. The number of appointments as entrants was, for the Otago District, 35, and to fill these the Board selected 22 females and 13 males. For these 35 positions there were nearly 200 applicants, most of them very well qualified so far as examination status is concerned, and the Board regretted that it had to disappoint so many of them.

Of the 35 probationers appointed during the year, 34 (97 per cent.) had passed the Matriculation Examination, and 1 had passed the teachers' D examination. Of the 34 who had passed Matriculation, 12 had also passed the teachers' D examination. The advance in examination status of those joining the service during the past few years is shown by the following having passed Matriculation or obtained partial Matriculation : 1920, 44 per cent. ; 1921, 55 per cent. ; 1922, 80 per cent. ; 1923, 82 per cent. ; 1924, 97 per cent. ; 1925, 97 per cent.

The Board's General Fund.—In its report for 1924 the Board directed attention to the inadequacy of the grants made by the Department to the Board's General Fund, and urged that a more liberal payment should be sanctioned. It desires again to emphasize the necessity for increased provision for administrative expenses. A promise was made by the Department that this important matter would receive consideration, but so far nothing has been done. The deficit on the Board's General Fund for the past year was £461 5s.

Inspection of Schools.—The Inspectors' estimate of the general efficiency of the schools is as follows : Excellent or very good, 13 per cent. ; good, 54 per cent. ; very fair, 39 per cent. ; fair, 4 per cent. This is an increase of about 10 per cent. in the schools of the good and very good groups, and a decrease of about 6 per cent. in those of the group which may be classed as below satisfactory. The Inspectors reported that, though the period of school work was much shorter than usual, owing to the enforced closing of the schools by the epidemic of infantile paralysis, the quality of the work was not detrimentally affected. As much ground was not covered as in a full year, but the thoroughness of the teaching more than made up for the deficiency in quantity.

The following table shows last year's results in comparison with those of the previous four years :—

Year.	Excellent or Very Good.	Good.	Very Fair.	Fair.	Weak.
	Per Cent.	Per Cent.	Per Cent.	Per Cent.	Per Cent.
1921	18	44	31	6	1
1922	17·3	50·4	25	7·3	..
1923	10	45	33	9	3
1924	10	47	33	9	1
1925	13	54	29	4	..

Agricultural Instruction.—During the past year instruction in elementary agriculture has formed a definite part of the course of 211 primary schools, and the rural-science programme has been followed in the district high schools. The enforced closing of the schools as a result of the epidemic immediately following the Christmas vacation more or less adversely affected the tangible results of the season's operations, but it can be said that, with the increasing appreciation of the value of the school garden in its various educational relations, an annual improvement is noted in the several phases of the work.

Results of School-garden Competitions.—(1.) Long carrots—1st, Ngapara ; 2nd, Mosgiel ; 3rd, Momona ; short carrots—1st, Momona ; 2nd, Green Island ; 3rd, Ngapara. Beet—1st, Mosgiel ; 2nd, Momona. Onions—1st, Green Island ; 2nd, Waiwera ; 3rd, Mosgiel. Parsnips—1st, Ngapara ; 2nd, Momona ; 3rd, Mosgiel. Marrow—1st, Kakapuaka ; 2nd, Mosgiel. (2.) Potato-growing competition—1st, Mosgiel ; 2nd, Pukepito ; 3rd, Mosgiel ; 4th, Waiwera. (3.) Onion-growing competition—1st, Mosgiel ; 2nd, Green Island ; 3rd, Waiwera ; 4th, Waiwera.